



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

## **Research and Educational Holocaust Centre**

## **International Contest on the Holocaust**

Statement by

**H.E. Ms Eleonora Valentinovna Mitrofanova**

**Permanent Delegate of the Russian Federation to UNESCO**

**Chairperson of the UNESCO Executive Board**

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

7 July 2010



Deputy Director-General,  
Director of International Relations of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre,  
Co-President of the Russian Research and Educational Holocaust Centre,  
Head of Paris Newsweek Bureau,  
Mr and Ms Pissar,  
Prize-winners,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, the international community marks the 65th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, a war which led to the systematic, full-scale extermination of millions of wholly innocent victims. The preservation of the memory of the Holocaust and the fight against all forms of Holocaust denial, are enshrined forever in resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. 27 January is proclaimed the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. These are truly historical collective achievements designed to ensure that the events of that time are forever preserved in the collective memory.

Throughout the past 65 years, ever since it was founded, UNESCO has also tirelessly strengthened its educational activities in the name of peace and respect for human rights with the aim of ensuring that genocide and intolerance never occur again. In 2007, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted an important resolution to develop special outreach programmes in this field.

Today, UNESCO once again welcomes the winners of the international Holocaust essay contest. I should like, in my capacity as Chairperson of the Executive Board of UNESCO, to underscore the Organization's commitment to mobilizing civil society so as to preserve the memory of this unprecedented human disaster.

This educational, critical and analytical function occupies a central place in UNESCO's endeavours to develop and strengthen the conscience of the younger generations. After all, for them, what matters is gaining knowledge of freedom and of the dangers which can engender hatred, fanaticism, racism and prejudice.

Our children and grandchildren must never become neither victims nor perpetrators nor mere observers of such acts, and to that end they need to know and remember the tragic history of the Holocaust. Paying our respects to the courage and selflessness of people doomed to an unavoidable death, to all the victims and the saviours, means fighting oblivion.

Clearly, countries which have known the hell of war and peoples which have borne incalculable loss cannot fail to react extremely sharply to attempts to revive fascism and anti-Semitism in the world. “Violence can only be concealed by a lie, and the lie can only be maintained by violence.” Who could not agree with Solzhenitsyn’s words? By erasing and rewriting humanity’s collective memory, a direct link to the past is broken, and this, unfortunately, does not serve the interests of the present or of the future.

Those who survived the hell of war and the furnaces of the concentration camps are all the more precious and dear to us, as they may still bring home to us the reality of life and death of an age we would like to believe has gone for ever. One of these living legends is the writer Samuel Pissar, whom I should like to thank from the bottom of my heart for being with us here today. Another of those undisputed genuine heroes with similarly extraordinary fate is the renowned social activist Simon Wiesenthal, who bequeathed us his Centre on the Holocaust and the Museum of Tolerance.

UNESCO is extremely proud that in its educational activity to inculcate the ideas of the defence of peace in the minds of people it can depend on the experience and close cooperation of organizations like the Simon Wiesenthal Centre and the Russian Research and Educational Holocaust Centre. Our shared determination to ensure universal vigilance compels us to give broad dissemination to education and the study of history. The categories and scale may differ, ranging from schools to the national media, and from municipal museum programmes to historical research by individuals. This particular instance concerns the international Holocaust essay contest, the primary aim of which is to seek paths to tolerance. Both the geographical origins of the prize-winners, and the thematic approaches used in their essays are wide-ranging. But they are all united by the memory of the Holocaust. And that is our collective memory.

“The disaster must never happen again. Anywhere. Ever.”

—

Finding the point of no return for intolerance is the responsibility of society as a whole and each of us individually.

I congratulate all the prize-winners and extend to them my best wishes for numerous valuable achievements in the future.